Former hospital administrator dies

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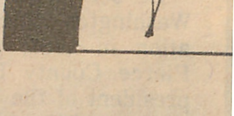

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June 1974

Huber's staying was mighty close

By **HOWARD FERGUSON**
TNT Staff Writer

In 1950 there came a day when Walter Huber just had to make up his mind. His job was phasing out and he had been looking. He had resigned himself to the probability of leaving the state. Then he heard about "this accounting job at a hospital" and took it.

On August 5 Huber, 68, will retire after 24 years with Tacoma General Hospital. His title is president and chief executive officer.

"It was a very close thing," Huber remembers. "I had only two weeks to go and I was all prepared to leave and this thing opened up and I just fell into it.

"I knew nothing about hospitals. I had never even been a patient in a hospital."

FOR SOMEONE WHO didn't know what he was doing, Huber has done well. Seven years after joining the hospital staff he was named administrator, then to the top job.

When Huber joined TG its assets had just reached $1 million. Today they total $11 million. "I recall very clearly that we had $97,000 worth of accounts receivable. I probably shouldn't use this terminology but the board worried itself sick over this.

"Now we look at $3 million in accounts receivable."

THAT MONEY WORRIES Huber, both as a bookkeeper and as a man.

"I think you have to live with a hospital to learn about what it's like. It's not a matter of becoming involved with the hospital but of being absorbed by it. You have no idea how much of your life it can influence.

"I have tried to meld together the business aspects and the medical. The business side is needed. But you cannot forget the humanitarien aspect.

"We had to do this with our accounts receivable and with our collections. You know there is that great story about going to the hospital and you get well and then you get the bill and you are sick again. There is some truth in that."

Huber's solution was a social service department "where we work with people to try to solve some of their problems."

It is unusual for Huber to speak that much about anything. A short, quiet, soft-spoken man, his life has been marked more by accomplishments than headlines.

Staff photo by Bob Rudsit

Walter Huber reminisced

Although he runs a business with a $12 million annual budget and an $8 million payroll, The News Tribune file on Huber contains just five brief clippings dated between 1955 and 1966 (including one about his being named president of the state's Association of Hospital Accountants).

"I'm not a colorful person," Huber says. "I guess I have just plugged along and done what is necessary."

AMONG THE THINGS he plugged along" at was carrying out the 1960 TG building program, being chief staff officer for the present building program that will replace the hospital's medical facilities, leading the fight for safety and professional training programs that have made TG's staff one of the most expert in the state, helping set up standard accounting systems for all hospitals.

Most of this has been detailed, business-type work and Huber admits "sometimes you have to wake yourself up and remember that there are a couple of hundred sick people out there."

"I think the thing that impressed me most when I found myself in this wonderland was the approach medical people take toward patients.

"The medical gown is the guarantee of equality. The medical approach is directed toward the problem not toward the individual.

"I don't know if I'm saying this right. But you bring a guy in from off Skid Road and there are all those doctors around him, trying to help him. They are looking at how to solve the medical problem not whether this is a guy who is worth saving for the community.

"Everybody gets the same treatment. That has impressed me t e most."

WHEN HUBER—born in Chehalis and a University of Washington business administration graduate—retires he doesn't really "have any great plans." He and wife Verna "aren't much for travel." And their two sons, Robert and James are grown and on their own.

But . . .

"I think life will be interesting. I am not going vegetate. I suppose I will also find some way of being useful."

The News Tribune, Tacoma, Thurs., March 8, 1984

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HUBER — Memorial Service for Walter L
will be Friday 2 PM at First Baptist Churc
Market St. with Pastor David L. Silke offic
Interment will be in Sunset Memorial Gar
Chehalis WA. Remberances may be made to T
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Baptist Church Memorial Fund. BUCKLEY KI
MORTUARY/DOWNTOWN in charge of arrang
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FOR THE

OBITUARIES

WALTER L. HUBER

SUMNER — Walter L. Huber, 77, a former Chehalis resident and retired president of Tacoma General Hospital, died Tuesday, March 6, in Tacoma.

Born in Chehalis on May 25, 1906, Huber moved to Sumner 10 years ago from Tacoma, where he had lived for some 40 years.He graduated cum laude from the University of Washington.

In 1950, he joined the Tacoma General Hospital staff as a business manager and comptroller. In 1955, he was appointed assistant administrator, and became administrator in 1959.He served as executive vice president from 1970 to 1974, when he became president.

Huber belonged to the Fist Baptist Church of Tacoma, Blue Cross Board of Directors, Tacoma Club, Executive Committee of Volunteer Chaplains, Tacoma-Pierce County Safety Council and the Kiwanis Club of Tacoma.

He was past president of the Washington State Nurses Planning Council, Washington State Hospital Association, Washington Chapter of Hospital Accountants Association and the Pierce County Hospital Council.

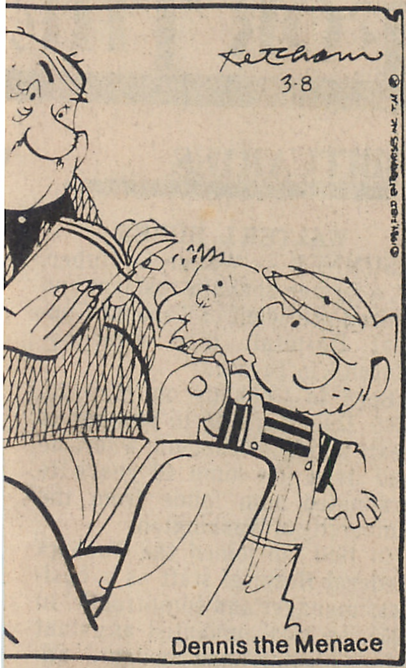
Huber was also a former board member of the Goodwill Industries Rehabilitation Center of Tacoma.

Survivors include his wife, Verna, at home; two sons, Robert Huber of Lake Oswego, Ore., and James Huber of Colfax; two brothers, Frank Huber of Salem, Ore., and Edwin Huber of Bothell; and five grandchildren.

A memorial service will be conducted at 2 p.m. Friday at the First Baptist Church of Tacoma, with the Rev. David L. Silke officiating.

Remembrances may be donations to Tacoma General Hospital Heart Care Fund, P.O. Box 5277, Tacoma, Wash., 98405, or the First Baptist Church Memorial Fund, Market and Ninth Streets, Tacoma, Wash., 98402.

Arrangements are under the direction of Buckley-King Funeral Home of Tacoma.



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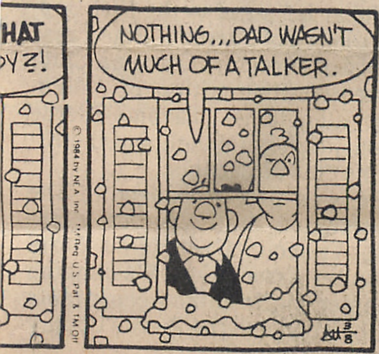

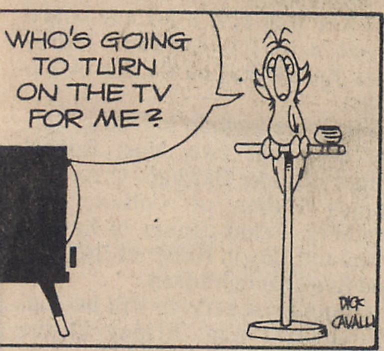

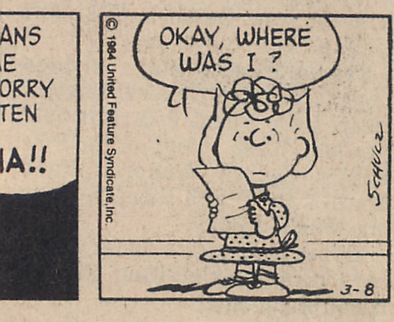

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He served as a member of the review committee of the Puget Sound Health Planning Council and as a trustee of the Washington State Hospital Association Insurance and Retirement Trust.

He spent 12 years as a member of the board of directors of Blue Cross, Washington-Alaska Inc., serving two years as president, two years as corporate secretary and seven years as a member of the executive committee.

He and his wife, the former Verna Paulsen, were married Oct. 23, 1934, and would have celebrated their golden wedding anniversary this year.

The Huber home is at 4208 218th St. E., Sumner.

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